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Sub-theme 11: Are Good Organizations Caring Places?

Māori values, care and compassion in organisations: a research strategy

Abstract

While significant attention has been given to theorising care and compassion in workplaces, much of the research on Māori (Indigenous New Zealand) values in organisations (MVO) and their relationship with well-being cannot be considered theory-work or theory-building. In this paper I offer a new research strategy for MVO research where a passion for expressing Māori voices in empirical descriptions has outperformed theorisation.

Key words: care and compassion, Māori values, theorisation, narratives, Indigenous knowledges.

Introduction

The context for this paper is Aotearoa New Zealand (here on in, New Zealand): a ‘post’-colonial society in which Māori (New Zealand Indigenous people) and Pākehā (non-Māori) co-exist. Some of the terms of that coexistence are governed by a series of important political and constitutional documents called Te Tiriti o Waitangi (The Treaty of Waitangi). These documents set the historical foundation for New Zealand. Indeed, power relationships between the New Zealand Crown and Māori are continually being negotiated with reference to the several versions of the Treaty which were signed in 1840. Claims

¹ I have Māori (Indigenous New Zealand) tribal affiliations to Te Atiawa, Te Whanganui-a-Tara (Wellington) and Pākehā (non-Indigenous New Zealand) ancestry. In almost equal measure I have lived in my Indigenous takiwā (tribal home territory) and elsewhere; as manuhiri (a visitor, a guest) in other regions of New Zealand and other countries.

brought by Māori relating to actions or oversights of the New Zealand Crown that breach the promises made in the Treaty have been considered since 1975 by the Waitangi Tribunal; a permanent commission of inquiry (Orange, 1987, 1989) (see Love & Tilley, 2014). Over the past several decades, research has been seen to provide a vehicle for Māori to exercise their *tinio rangatiratanga* (self-determination).

Much of the enthusiasm for Māori-centric research can be attributed to the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith and other Māori scholars (e.g. Bishop, 1996; Metge, 1995) who have set the foundation for the way research is and should be done by and with Māori and Indigenous peoples world-wide. When Smith (1999) wrote *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, and Zed books published it, it is doubtful that anyone would have foreseen the impact it would have on Māori and Indigenous researchers around the world. In her book, Smith confronts us with a simple and stark reality from the outset; that research has trampled on the *mana* of Indigenous peoples. That is, a history of research and researching agendas has sought to interfere with the dignity and self-determination of Māori and Indigenous peoples.

Eve Tuck notes that since the release of *Decolonizing Methodologies*, “Indigenous studies have become more prominent institutions of higher education throughout the world” (Tuck, 2013: 367). Smith and others have made an important contribution to Indigenous research practice and that contribution has been acknowledged internationally. For Margaret Kovach (2009: 24) seeing Smith’s book for the first time on a book shelf evoked “a rush...an external validation that Indigenous research counted”. For others, Indigenous researchers offer a critical lens which “provides valuable insights into...issues of subjugated knowledges...” (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 2008: 147).

Over the past decade or so, Māori and Pākehā scholars have emphasised the importance of Māori values in building inclusive and caring organisations. Indeed, for Spiller, Erakovic, Henare and Pio (2010: 153), “care is at the heart of the Māori values system”. The aim of this paper is to set a strategy for researching Māori values, care and compassion at work. In the following section I briefly review the literature on Māori values and their relevance for methodology and organisation research. From that review I make the assessment that Māori

values and organisation (MVO) research as largely grounded in empirical description and disconnected with care and compassion research in other contexts. I then detail a three-part research strategy that re-orientes MVO research so that it better connects to care and compassion research and produces theoretical explanations relevant to complex lived situations. The paper finishes with a brief conclusion.

Māori values, methodology and organisation research

Māori values have become commonplace in the Māori research space but only very recently and more so in debates around methodology. At a symposium on Indigenous research held at the University of Canterbury (New Zealand) in 2015, Professor Linda Tuhiwai Smith claimed that we should do what we can in the academy to uphold the *mana* ('the integrity' or 'the status') of the people with whom we are connected through our research. This teaching appeared in her 1999 book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, which I introduced earlier. In that book, Smith (1999: 120) sought the guidance of Ngahua Te Awakotuku on the relevance of *mana* to the research process for which she had this to offer; "Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people)". The term *mana* is associated with the Māori value, *manaakitanga* which I'll come to in a moment.

A considerable number of researchers have offered commentaries on the centrality of *mana* to research in their respective and diverse fields. In her research, Wikitoria August (2005: 122) comments on the "*mana* (integrity, charisma, prestige)" of Māori women and how Māori knowledge is fundamental to the protection of Māori women identity. Cram (1993) once argued that "the purpose of Maori knowledge is to uphold the mana of the community" (in Henry and Pene, 2001: 236). These notions are connected to earlier research which considered the processes of land alienation and the pursuit of *mana* by Māori (Ballara, 1982), and how *mana* played out in the politics of authority and power in Māori society (Bowden, 1979). Such a construct holds significant meanings for Māori; contested meanings that require analysis yet deserve our attention.

Over the past decade, Māori values and organisation (MVO) research has emerged as among the most popular topics in New Zealand studies of organisation(s). Māori values

come from ancient knowledges (Spiller et al., 2011a) to provide meaning and to inform practice as they relate specifically to Te Ao Māori (the Māori world) (Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016). Much of the success of the research is attributed to Māori researchers and collaborators (Māori and non-Māori) committed to revealing the cultural elements (Māori values) that Māori managers, entrepreneurs, business people and employees draw upon to inspire their actions and inform their decisions as they relate to organisation(s) and work.

These Māori values include such important constructs as *manaakitanga*, *whanaungatanga*, and *kaitiakitanga* to name a limited few². People who embrace *manaakitanga* maintain a sense of respect and kindness and seek to uplift the personal power (or the *mana*) of others (Forster, Palmer & Barnett, 2016), in turn heightening their own (Spiller et al. 2011a). People who uphold *whanaungatanga* commit themselves to the well-being of the group, embrace a relational view, and focus their attention on making connections with others (Metge, 1995). People who value *kaitiakitanga* enact an attitude of preserving a way of life, of conserving resources (Kuntz, Näswall, Beckingsale & Macfarlane, 2014) and fostering a relational view of harmony thereby sheltering vulnerable resources (including people) from harmful activities and behaviours.

Some of the MVO research has looked to shed light on the Māori values that underpin Māori businesses in the New Zealand tourism sector. As a starting point, Spiller et al (2011a) note that care, value and wealth have similar meanings in feminist, Indigenous and stakeholder views of organization and as such form an analytical grounding for exploring Māori approaches to business. The authors link the ethic of care work from Gilligan (1982) with indigenous and stakeholder perspectives through Donaldson and Preston (1995), Freeman (1984), and Leana and Rousseau (2000) to “offer a business case for creating

² Harmsworth (2005: 14) offers a more comprehensive list: “*Tikanga* denotes the Māori body of rules and values used to govern or shape peoples behaviour and some of the key values include: *Tino Rangatiratanga* and *Mana Motuhake* – self-determination, independence or inter-dependence; *Mana Whenua* – rights of self governance, rights to authority over traditional tribal land and resources; *Whānaukatanga* – family connections and family relationships; *Kaitiakitanga* – guardianship of the environment; *Manaakitanga* – reciprocal and unqualified acts of giving, caring, and hospitality; *Arohatanga* – the notion of care, respect, love, compassion; *Awhinatanga* – assist or care for; *Whakakoha* – the act of giving; *Whakaponono* – trust, honesty, integrity; *Whakakotahitanga* – respect for individual differences and participatory inclusion for decision making; *Wairua* – the spiritual dimension to life”.

relational well-being and wealth” (Spiller et al. 2011a: 157). The authors reveal how Māori business is a voyage of collaboration and connection ultimately leading to multi-dimensional welfare. The Māori approach to business, Spiller et al. (2011a) argue, questions shareholder primacy and privileges long-term stakeholder notions to ultimately reject agendas focussed on the immediate production of material wealth.

Challenging the self-interest model of business through an Indigenous Māori perspective is the argument put forward by the same authors in their second paper (Spiller, Pio, Erakovic & Henare, 2011b). In this article the authors show what can be taken from a relational wisdom approach underpinned by Māori values. This time they set out to reframe the dominant “economic argument that has seen companies profit and prosper at the expense of communities and ecologies” (Spiller et al. 2011b: 223). Their argument relies on the notion of building wisdom through *kaitiakitanga* (stewardship) to assist organisations to move beyond traditional business practises.

Another conceptual paper on Māori tourism written by McIntosh, Zygadlo and Matunga (2004: 331) is grounded in a Māori values-based view of business. Addressing a cultural shortcoming in the literature, the authors suggest “Māori cultural values have not been derived from an approach that is culturally acceptable to Māori”. The research identifies the Māori values which underpin a Māori-centred tourism ethic according to Māori and non-Māori people in the tourism industry. Several values were found to be important in the study; “nga matatini Māori (Maori diversity), kotahitanga (unity, solidarity), tino rangatiratanga (self-determination), whanaungatanga (relationship, kinship), kaitiakitanga (guardianship), manaakitanga (warm hospitality), wairuatanga (state of being spiritual), tuhono (principle of alignment), puawaitanga (principle of best outcomes) and purotu (principle of transparency)” (McIntosh et al., 2004: 339).

Each of these papers (McIntosh et al., 2004; Spiller et al. 2011a; Spiller et al. 2011b) describes how Māori values inform business practices. The analyses and presentation of findings and results in all three are conceptual and descriptive thereby detailing the “features or qualities of individual things, acts, or events” (Werkmeister, 1959: 484 in Bacharach, 1989: 496) without engaging in theory building. Both the former articles engage

comprehensively with theory literature: stakeholder theory and ethical theory (Spiller et al. 2011a; 2011b) and stewardship theory, balance theory of wisdom (Spiller et al. 2011b), but fall short of creating theory. So too does McIntosh et al. (2004). Furthermore, theories of caring and compassion do not feature in these studies; although we might accept that little care and compassion theorising had been done at the time the authors were preparing their papers. While theorising may not have been their objective, these papers have been central to understanding a Māori ethic of care in business. They reveal the care and compassion afforded the business and natural environments beyond organisational boundaries.

Jarrold Haar has made a valued and sustained contribution with several collaborators (i.e. Dave M. Brougham; Benjamin Delaney; Maree Roche; Daniel Taylor) on the role that cultural support plays in the working lives of Māori employees. For Haar and Brougham (2011) their research began with the need to consider the beliefs and the attitudes of Maori workers in their workplaces based on the notion that cultural aspects may be an opportunity for companies and managers to gain greater outcomes from them. They argued that, “how Māori workers saw their culture portrayed and respected in the workplace was significantly linked to their loyalty and self-reported OCBs [organisational citizenship behaviours]” (Haar & Brougham, 2011: 470). The authors make additional statements about the relevance of their findings for organisational HRM policies and for building Māori employee’ pride in workplaces.

In their 2013 paper, Haar and Brougham advance their earlier 2011 study by testing a career satisfaction model (human capital, sociodemographic, individual differences and organizational sponsorship) with a cultural wellbeing factor to show that “workplace cultural wellbeing is fundamentally more important than all other existing factors in the career success literature” (Haar & Brougham, 2013: 885). How a particular Māori value (*whanaungatanga*) might influence firm performance was the focus for Haar and Delaney (2009) in their conceptual paper on entrepreneurship and Māori cultural values. Here, the authors advocate for the use of Māori cultural concepts in broader conceptualisations and theorisations from Western models and suggest “it is important to encompass a wider perspective from those who are often side-lined from debate by way of their minority status” (p.25).

Continuing the work on the role that culture plays in the working lives of Māori employees, Haar, Roche and Taylor's (2012) paper on the links between work–family conflict tested work–family and family–work conflict (time and strain dimensions) on the turnover intentions of Māori employees. The authors found that “both work–family and family–work conflict, time and strain, were significantly related to turnover intentions, but work–family conflict dimensions were fully mediated by family–work conflict dimensions” (Haar, Roche & Taylor, 2012: 2546). They claim that connection to *whānau* (extended family) is especially important for Māori which can influence key decisions such as where to work.

Haar and his collaborators have made an immense contribution to understanding the dynamics at play within organisational boundaries. Primarily their work tests a small number of variables and relationships through structural equation modelling. In Haar and Brougham (2011), for example, the authors hypothesised that higher cultural satisfaction at work will relate positively to both loyalty (H1) and organisational citizenship behaviours (H2), and that loyalty will mediate the latter relationship (H3). In Haar and Brougham (2013), to illustrate further, the authors tested the proposition that workplace cultural wellbeing will be positively associated with higher career satisfaction (H1) and that employee collectivism will moderate that relationship (H2). With such a small number of propositions, the papers offer useful statements of relationships but the extent to which managers and employees might implement them in their complex lived and diverse organisations is questionable.

In her short paper, Reid (2011) examined the impact of Māori cultural values on career processes. In that study, Reid gathered narratives from Māori workers around their careers preserving their own voices and experiences which, she claims, have often been omitted in previous studies. The findings from her research powerfully suggest that “Māori cultural values inform career processes” (Reid, 2011: 194). An outcome of the findings was a typology of three descriptors grouping Māori participants according to cultural and career characteristics; the “keeper” (Māori, often raised in traditional Māori contexts, who retain traditional culture and traditions to guide their careers), the “seeker” (Māori who often shift between Māori and non-Māori worlds drawing on various cultures for guidance in their careers), and the “cloaked” (Māori who attempt to find a cultural identity meaningful for

them but where culture and career were separate) (Reid, 2011: 192-3). The typological synthesis of data in this paper reveals its descriptive nature (Bacharach, 1989).

Following on with the theme of employee perceptions of work in organisations, the connection between “organisational espousal of cultural group values and organisational commitment and citizenship behaviours” was the focus of a paper authored by Kuntz et al. (2014: 102). Having sampled Māori employees from Māori-led organisations the authors found that “an organisation’s adherence to specific Māori values (wairuatanga and whakamana tangata) was reciprocated with organisational commitment from Māori employees” (Kuntz, 2014: 116). Following that study and drawing on its framework as a foundation, Harris, Macfarlane, Macfarlane and Jolly (2016) looked to Māori and non-Māori employees’ perceptions of Māori values in the workplace. All participants (albeit a small number: 4) desired the incorporation of Māori values in their workplaces and stated their organisations actively promoted Māori values in the workplace in the recent past; although it was found that one value in particular – wairuatanga (the spiritual dimension) – had faded in recent years.

Observations are made to suggest when employees perceive that the organisation they work for cares for them it is likely that employees will be more committed to their organisations. Although, the specific psychological conditions, professions, industries, work tasks, work relationships, job characteristics and so on are largely omitted from the descriptions available. A leadership context is provided in two papers co-authored by Diane Ruwhiu and one by Forster et al. (2016) which articulate the competing yet compatible nature of Māori and Western leadership models providing useful insights.

Grounded in a kaupapa Māori research approach, Ruwhiu and Cone (2013) explore leadership practices in a Māori business context drawing from their understanding of Te Ao Māori (the Māori world), and commendably, “give sense and explanatory power to the worldviews of indigenous peoples” (Ruwhiu & Cone, 2013: 39). In doing so they present their paper “as one thread of a narrative emerging from the field of Māori business about leadership practice that make sense to Māori”. In Ruwhiu and Elkin (2016), the authors conceptualise two emerging domains of leadership – Māori and servant – both of which are

prioritised for leadership development because their acceptance of “alternative ontologies, epistemologies and worldviews” (p.308).

A unique and important contribution to the MVO literature is Forster et al.’s (2016) paper on Māori women and leadership. In that paper the authors bring to the fore Indigenous womens’ narratives linking leadership with concepts of stewardship and rights to argue that Māori women in leadership are powerful influencers among their *whānau* (families) and communities, exercising *mana* (empowerment) and *kaitiakitanga* (stewardship) to protect and advance the rights of their people and their aspirations. Specifically, they claim that leadership is performed in ways that advance Māori rights through fundamental values such as “whakapapa/connectedness, manaakitanga/caring, whakaiti/humility, kotahitanga/unity, and kaitiakitanga/guardianship of taonga/treasures” (Forster et al. 2016: 340).

Forster et al.’s (2016) and Ruwhiu and Elkin’s (2016) papers appear in the special issue on Indigenous leadership in, *Leadership* highlighting the importance of Māori leadership to broader international academic conversations. In one of a few MVO papers to engage in writing about the act of theorising, Forster et al. (2016: 326) maintain that “theorizing through storytelling to understand phenomena is a common Māori practice”. Their paper starts to theorise Indigenous leadership and offers a typology of narratives presenting examples of leadership roles performed by Māori women. The authors give a commanding account drawing on leadership, stewardship and ethical theories. Ruwhiu and Cone (2013) draw heavily on leadership-based theories also to craft their paper.

When Māori values are embraced, businesses can create well-being amongst stakeholders and ecosystems (Spiller et al., 2011a; Spiller et al., 2011b), realise their self-determination (McIntosh et al., 2004), and potentially improve their firm performance (Haar & Delaney, 2009). When organisations make Māori values part of their internal workplaces, employees may be more loyal (Haar & Brougham, 2011), more satisfied in their careers (Haar & Brougham, 2013), and show higher commitment and citizenship behaviours (Kuntz et al., 2014). When Māori values are embraced in research processes they open up new possibilities and alternative world views about what does and does not constitute legitimate forms of knowledge (Forster et al. 2016; Ruwhiu & Cone, 2013; Ruwhiu & Elkin, 2016).

As such, incorporating Māori values at the organisational level has some positive outcomes for organisations and employees and may even foster diversity and grow New Zealand's bicultural heritage (see Harris et al., 2016).

It would seem there is a valuable opportunity at this point in the development of Māori knowledges to advance the research beyond empirical descriptions of business practices and workplace experiences to gain some clarity about 'the complex conditions under which' Māori values can lead to improving people's working lives. My question here is that if "care and compassion, which are grounded in relationships and relatedness, have much to contribute to an interconnected, suffering, and surprising world" (Rynes, Bartunek, Dutton & Margolis, 2012: 504), then under which conditions can Māori cultural values create caring and compassionate workplaces? An equally important question is, under which conditions might Māori cultural values create uncaring and uncompassionate workplaces? Insightful empirical descriptions about how cultural values contribute to well-being have received some attention, but the MVO literature has not considered these caring/compassion questions with any theoretical depth.

A research strategy

I have described Māori Values and Organisation (MVO) research as largely: (a) grounded in empirical description, and (b) disconnected with care and compassion research. In this section I create a three-part research strategy that re-orientes MVO research so that it better connects to care and compassion research and produces theoretical explanations relevant to complex lived situations. To those ends, MVO research becomes: (a) complementary to Western knowledges, (b) theory-building in process, and (c) narrative in explanatory style.

Towards complementary (Māori w Western) research

The first part of the research strategy is to uncover how constructs and connections between them created in contexts without specific attention to, or consideration for, Māori contextual factors can offer explanatory power and provide guidance for investigations specific to organisational contexts whereby Māori values might play a part. Care and

compassion in organisations seems to hold significant prospect not least because “care is at the heart of the Māori values system” (Spiller et al. 2011: 153). Care and compassion have only recently become an explicit focus for management researchers. The 2012 *AMR* Special Topic Forum edited by Rynes, Bartunek, Dutton and Margolis (2012) comprehensively changed how human relatedness, helping, care and compassion play out theoretically and in organisational settings. Engaging in conversations with this literature makes sense for advancing Māori-based knowledges.

The creation of binary opposites oversimplifies contextual complexities. Much of the research in New Zealand has sought to distinguish Māori from Western ways of knowing. It has been important to do so. However, for the study of organisations and management, these binaries cause problems. Some examples of the complexity may help here. Māori people clearly participate in organisations (as employees, managers, owners, volunteers, students, consultants) world-wide and as such the empirical contexts for theorisations cannot and should not be limited to New Zealand. Further, it would seem reasonable to assume non-Māori people embrace Māori values. Māori and non-Māori people embrace and experience Māori values in different ways at work. Some may have been raised in traditional Māori contexts and retain traditional Māori culture and traditions to guide their work, others may shift between Māori and non-Māori contexts drawing on multiple cultures, and others still may be seeking to find a cultural identity meaningful for them (see Reid, 2011). Māori values draw from other cultural values for meaning and guidance. Indeed, New Zealand organisations are mostly colonial-type structures, some of which have been open to Māori ways of doing things. My point here is that ‘Māori’ and ‘Western’ ways of knowing and doing are, in tandem, complementary due to the complex empirical nature of people, cultures, organisations and societies.

What I want to add is that workplace care and compassion research can be useful for research delving in to the place of Māori values in organisation(s). Take the Māori value *whanaungatanga* for example. I mentioned previously that people who uphold *whanaungatanga* commit themselves to the well-being of the group, embrace a relational view, and focus their attention on making connections with others (Metge, 1995). Western theories can help us reconsider, so long as researchers engage in critical and reflective

processes, the boundaries of this value and the role it might play in theories and organisational practice. For example, would we consider *whanaungatanga* a prosocial value? Prosocial values are, according to Atkins and Parker (2012: 528), defined as “values directed toward preserving and enhancing the welfare of others rather than benefiting the self”. How does the research of *whanaungatanga* as a (non-)prosocial value help us make sense of Māori values and their relevance for building caring and compassionate workplaces?

In some commentaries *whanaungatanga* is more reciprocal than prosocial. In others, as Haar and Delaney (2009) have demonstrated, *whanaungatanga* can be operationalised to attain self-interested competitive advantages; something that appears to extend beyond the boundaries of what we might consider to be prosocial. The same goes for *manaakitanga*; a value whereby people maintain a sense of respect and kindness and seek to uplift the personal power (or the *mana*) of others (Forster et al. 2016), in turn heightening their own (Spiller et al. 2011). Might we consider this an other-oriented value; part of a collectivist culture as Grant and Patil (2012) explain?

Some researchers have commented that care is an enactment of behaviours seeking to maintain and restore a complex life-web of selves and environments (Tronto, 2010: 160), which appears to align with the Māori value, *kaitiakitanga*: a value which promotes the attitude of preserving a way of life (Kuntz et al. 2014) and of fostering a relational view of harmony thereby sheltering vulnerable people and resources from harm. Engaging in conversations within and beyond ‘cultural boundaries’ would seem to be a worthy pursuit.

Towards theory-building processes

Explanation is fundamental to building theory and understanding practice: if Māori values have a role to play in creating caring and compassionate workplaces, we want to embrace the feat; if they generate hostility and cruelty, we want to avoid the failure (see Pentland, 1999). Whichever way, Pentland (1999) maintains; we need theoretical explanations detailing the specific conditions leading to the specific outcomes we hope to achieve/avoid. The consideration of Māori peoples, organizations and knowledges within studies of

organisation has provided an interesting and potentially valuable stream of research over the past decade or so. It would seem, as I mentioned earlier, that much of the published work consists of empirical descriptions and models demarcating the boundaries for what does and does not constitute Māori forms of organising and well-being. Perhaps it is a consequence of the criticisms afforded Western academics that Māori researchers and Māori context specific research are reluctant to engage in debates at the level of theory building.

The empirical literature reviewed in this paper draws heavily from *Decolonizing Methodologies* and *kaupapa Māori* as guides for research processes primarily because they are culturally relevant and challenge the traditional functionalist agendas of organisation research. These guides have empowered researchers to bring Māori and Indigenous voices to the fore. As a result, researchers have been keen to preserve Māori voices and to respect Māori participant' descriptions of key constructs central to their respective studies. They have done so in powerful and empowering ways and empirical descriptions have been preserved. What are now needed are theoretical explanations that help us to account for the complex lived organisational phenomena we hope to inform.

Māori researchers have had much to say about the inadequacies of functionalist theorising (see Smith, 1999). Organisation studies researchers outside the Māori academy share similar concerns. For Clegg and Hardy (1999: 1), “functionalist research emphasizes consensus and coherence rather than conflict, dissensus and the operations of power”. This body of literature holds significant prospect for Māori researchers and Māori context specific research. As Clegg and Hardy (1999) have further pointed out, “gone is the certainty, if it ever existed, about what organizations are; gone, too, is the certainty about how they should be studied, the place of the researcher, the role of methodology, the nature of theory” (p.3). Like Māori researchers and researchers working in Māori contexts, non-Māori researchers have been quick to challenge Western assumptions about what is to do organisation research and theory work. Theory building need not be an exercise in conformity; but we must engage in theorising if we hope to promote care and compassion at work through our research.

Towards a narrative style of theorizing

Theory writing is a difficult and complex task. The way much of the care and compassion theorising is done is through a propositional style stating cause and effect relationships. Traditionally, Māori researchers and Māori context specific research has largely rejected this type of propositional-type theorising primarily because of its connection to positivist-based roots. As mentioned previously, much of the MVO research is considered pre-theoretical. That which does attempt to theorise (e.g. Spiller et al. 2011a; Reid, 2011) is, what Cornelissen (2017) refers to as typological; the clustering and categorisation of ideas ready for empirical testing. Cornelissen (2017) has identified that propositional and typological styles are common amongst management theorising but there is also a third; a narrative style. My argument here is that narrative theorising holds significant prospect for MVO care and compassion research because, as Forster et al. (2016: 326) have noted, “theorizing through storytelling to understand phenomena is a common Māori practice”.

Narrative theorising involves the “sequenc[ing] of events that leads to a particular outcome an author is seeking to explain” (Cornelissen, 2017: 5). It is plotted causality that is central to narrative thereby distinguishing it from cause-effect forms of knowing (Ricoeur, 1991), that Māori researchers and Māori context specific research have sought to challenge. Narrative theorising urges us to “...take a critical stance toward our taken-for-granted ways of understanding the world...” (Burr, 2003: 2). Certain events and experiences and ways of understanding them are defined by time and place and vary across and within cultural contexts (Lock & Strong, 2010), making narrative theorisation a significant prospect for Māori-centred research.

Theorising can seem to be a hard, uniform scientific agenda that lacks the diversity required to convince cultures outside the mainstream to engage in theory work. Māori have unique ways of knowing and narrative can account for some of them. Take a central component of narrative – time – as an example. The concept of ‘Māori time’ is a well-known adage in New Zealand, referring to Māori people’s alleged lack of concern for time, timetables and scheduling (McKay & Walmsley, 2003). Indeed, ‘Māori time’ is a pejorative term in that it suggests, “laziness and unreliability, that Māori are never ‘on time’” (McKay & Walmsley,

2003: 85). But for Māori, Ranginui Walker (1982) commented, Māori time is a positive construct: “All people who live in urban industrial societies have their lives regulated by measured time...on the marae, the authentic setting for Māori culture, these ideas, central to Māori time, slow down the rhythm of life. Measured time becomes meaningless as the values of relating to people, discussion and the arrival of consensus take over” (Walker, 1982: n.p.).

In other contexts, the present is a time to move forward, to redress and perhaps forget the past in a ‘time heals’ cultural conception (see Hall, 1983). Hall (1983: 43) recognised the incompatibilities of time between the Native American Hopi and government bureaucrats (including himself): “with many cultures there are long periods during which people are making up their minds or waiting for a consensus to be achieved. We would do well to pay more attention to these things”. Differences in time and temporal orientation, then, are absolutely fundamental to theorising for Māori researchers and researchers engaged in Māori context specific research. Narrative theorising holds significant prospect because both cultural context and time feature prominently in the narrative style and are “written into the script of theoretical explanations” (Cornelissen, 2017: 5). Because stories and storytelling are central constructs for MVO research, and for organisation studies, “good stories are central to building better theory” (Pentland, 1999: 711), narrative theorising must hold some prospect for Māori researchers and Māori context specific research. Some work needs to be done to detail how narrative theorising can assist theorising Māori values, care and compassion in organisations.

Conclusion

MVO research has been quick to engage in empirical description; stepping back to theorise prior to empirical investigations should now be the agenda. This paper has looked at Māori cultural values and work organisation (MVO) research. In the broader international context of work, it makes sense that we need theories that help us comprehend the intricate and important processes and circumstances that permit and impede care and compassion in our workplaces (Rynes et al., 2012). To enrich the knowledge about the role of Māori cultural values in New Zealand workplaces we require comprehensive, context specific theorising.

If “care is at the heart of the Māori values system” (Spiller et al., 2011: 153), we need theoretical and practical insights into *how* organisational actors embrace, maintain and change value systems to aid caring, helping and compassion (Grant & Patil, 2012).

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